

**ESCAP – UNDESA ROUNDTABLE ON ICT ACCESS  
AND E-GOVERNMENT FOR ACHIEVING THE  
MILLENIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS REPORT  
17 June 2010-18 June 2010**

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## **I. Background**

1. The United Nations Economic Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP), in cooperation with the United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG) under the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the Ministry of Public Administration and Security (MOPAS) of the Republic of Korea, organized the Roundtable on ICT access and e-Government for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The roundtable was organized as a special session of the International Conference on Good Governance for National Development<sup>1</sup>, and was held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, on 18 June 2010.

2. The roundtable was organized as an activity of the project entitled “Strengthening ICT Policies and Applications to Achieve MDG and WSIS Goals in Asia and the Pacific”, which is funded by the Korea-ESCAP Cooperation Fund. This project seeks to focus ICT policies and applications on achieving MDG and WSIS goals in Asia and the Pacific. The roundtable discussions were based on the previous sub-regional meetings<sup>2</sup> held in Bangkok in October 2009.

## **II. Objectives**

3. The “ESCAP-UNDESA Roundtable on ICT Access and e-Government for Achieving the MDGs” sought to exchange perspectives and share insights and experiences on forming effective development strategies through good governance and ICT in the Asia-Pacific region. The roundtable identified opportunities and challenges related to emerging technologies and aimed to develop a framework for regional cooperation by providing a platform to discuss key issues concerning policies, technologies and information dissemination models which are conducive to the achievement of MDGs. Against this context, the roundtable also aimed to build the capacity of policy and decision makers to identify policy options in order to expand ICT access to under-serviced areas of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Land-locked Developing Countries (LLDC), and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

## **III. Participation**

4. The roundtable was attended by more than forty five participants including policy-makers, e-Government practitioners, and international scholars of public administrations. The detailed list of participants to the roundtable can be seen in Annex II.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.unescap.org/idd/events/2010\\_ESCAP\\_DESA\\_Roundtable\\_ITC/index.asp](http://www.unescap.org/idd/events/2010_ESCAP_DESA_Roundtable_ITC/index.asp)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.unescap.org/idd/events/2009\\_sRW-MDG-WSIS-Central%20and%20South%20Asia/index.asp](http://www.unescap.org/idd/events/2009_sRW-MDG-WSIS-Central%20and%20South%20Asia/index.asp) and [http://www.unescap.org/idd/events/2009\\_sRW-MDG-WSIS-SEAsia%20and%20Pacific/index.asp](http://www.unescap.org/idd/events/2009_sRW-MDG-WSIS-SEAsia%20and%20Pacific/index.asp)

## IV. Proceedings

5. The roundtable was chaired by Mr. Zengpei Xuan, Director of Information and Communications and Disaster Risk Reduction Division (IDD) of ESCAP. During his introductory remarks he promoted applications that use ICT - such as e-Government - which offer opportunities to improve peoples' way of life and accelerate the achievement of MDGs in the Asia-Pacific region. The programme of the roundtable can be seen in Annex I.

6. Mr. Richard Kirby, Inter-regional Adviser, E-Government Knowledge Management Branch of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) of DESA, made introductory remarks which highlighted the findings of the United Nations e-Government Survey 2010 "Leveraging E-government at a time of Financial and Economic Crisis"<sup>3</sup>. He identified that infrastructure, human capacity, and ICT inclusiveness were critical elements which determined the degree of e-Government readiness of a country. Singapore and Kazakhstan were mentioned as countries which made impressive progress within the last two years, reflecting their positions in the e-Government development index. The presenter also referred to an e-Government self-assessment tool for governments named "METER" as well as an initiative, Public Administration Knowledge Space (PAKS), being developed by DPADM.

7. During the session presenters and participants discussed the opportunities provided by ICT to engage people into the decision-making processes for accelerating the achievement of socio-economic development goals. These ICT instruments may include the so-called Web 2.0 tools, such as social networking and mobile applications, which facilitate more efficient and effective information dissemination and transactions with citizens for economic and social purposes.

8. Mr. Cihat Huseyin Basocak, Mr. Jorge Martinez-Navarrete and Mr. Younggyu Woo of Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division (IDD) of ESCAP presented research on ICT access and e-Government, introducing practical examples of mobile technologies for improving health and reducing poverty in the region, as well as progress made to date with respect to the project entitled "Strengthening ICT Policies and Applications to Achieve MDG and WSIS Goals in Asia and the Pacific". The presenters informed the participants that mobile telephone networks had expanded rapidly among LDCs, especially LLDCs, with over 100% growth between 2003 and 2008, while SIDS had shown slower growth. While mobile communication has become the predominant means for communication among LDCs, an important digital divide appears in regards to broadband network development and its usage, and a negative correlation between the decline in fixed telephone lines and growth in broadband subscription was found.

9. The presenters emphasized that strengthening efforts at the national and regional levels to achieve the MDGs and WSIS goals through ensuring ICT access was

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www2.unpan.org/egovkb/global\\_reports/10report.htm](http://www2.unpan.org/egovkb/global_reports/10report.htm)

fundamental. It was recommended that Governments capitalize on the growth of mobile cellular networks and that the development of ICT infrastructure and applications receive adequate private and public financing. Particular attention was paid to the fact that by the year 2010 the Asia-Pacific region will have close to 53 million international migrants and that mobile phones offer a good opportunity to transmit remittances to currently unbanked sectors of the population in an efficient manner. In the domain of health care it was mentioned that providing health care services using mobile phones (M-health) has great potential to provide real-time diagnoses and accurate health information, track diseases, and respond to natural disasters in rural areas.

10. Mr. Dong Cheol Kim, Director, WiBro Team of the Telecommunications Policy Bureau of the Korea Communications Commission (KCC), shared with the participants the findings of research done on the Republic of Korea and in particular how ICT industry development had been a strategic factor in increasing economic competitiveness. Additionally, the speaker summarized some of the policies implemented by the Government which have contributed to the success of the development within the ICT industry, including the “Master Plan for Informatisation Promotion”, CYBER KOREA 21, and e-KOREA VISION 2007. He also mentioned examples of successful e-Government applications such as tax collection, vehicle registration, and information systems pertaining to government procurement. The presenter emphasized that a key success factor was the establishment of the ICT promotion fund. This fund received financial contributions from the Korean Government, telecom service operators (certain amount of yearly revenue prescribed by their license), income from the auction of radio wave frequencies, and dividends from government owned companies - the size of this fund had already reached several billions of dollars by the year 2000. The Korean ICT promotion fund was used to invest in IT research and development (R&D), training IT human resources, standardization, creation of an environment conducive to R&D, and providing loans to IT ventures. In response to a question about how to build capacity of government officials and the population in general among developing countries, the presenter cited the example that during the 1990s more than 10 million Korean citizens received free IT training at a time when ICT was not popular.

11. Mr. Yeong-ro Lee, Executive Vice President of the Digital Infrastructure Division of the National Information Society Agency, Republic of Korea, shared the Korean vision on how to transform a society to an information society (e-Society) while at the same time promoting energy efficiency. According to him, broadband is one of the ultimate solutions to sustainable development because it can reduce the need for movement of people, and in turn, the capacity to reduce energy consumption and transportation significantly.

12. The presenter described some examples of projects implemented by the Government of the Republic of Korea in the areas of ICT research and development through the Korean Research and Education Network (KOREN) programme and projects; through the Korea Information Infrastructure-Government (KII-G) programme for government ICT applications and through the Korea Information Infrastructure-Private (KII-P) initiative on ICT applications for the private sector. One of the projects presented was the Fiber-To-The-School (FTTS) project, which provided broadband connectivity using fiber optic cables to over 11 thousand schools in the country. Some of

the financial mechanisms to support such projects were described; For example, through a funds matching system the central government, local governments and telecomm companies contribute funds proportionally 1:1:2 to connect rural areas. Additionally, initiatives on m-Government are currently being introduced in Korea.

13. Mr. Anshuman Varma, Programme Officer of the United Nations Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT), a regional centre of ESCAP, presented its flagship capacity-building programme, *the Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders*. The programme includes a comprehensive ICT for development (ICTD) training curriculum that aims to enhance the awareness and skills amongst key decision makers on use of ICT for socio-economic development. The programme has been rolled out in 16 countries of the Asia-Pacific region through an inclusive approach involving close partnership with government agencies, national training institutions and sub-regional organizations. To increase its reach, an online, distance learning version of the training is also available through the APCICT Virtual Academy. More information about these initiatives can be found at: [www.unapcict.org/](http://www.unapcict.org/).

14. Mr. Tufool Al Dhahab, Marketing Team Leader of the Information Technology Authority of the Sultanate of Oman introduced the e.Oman strategy which the government is currently implementing. This strategy seeks to develop a digital society with a connected government, a vibrant ICT industry and business. The presentation covered the following issues:

- ICT capacity-building and awareness building (through this programme, the Sultanate trained and certified 93,000 civil servants on ICT over three years)
- Infrastructure
- e-Services projects, such as their single-sign-on portal ([www.oman.om](http://www.oman.om)) which provides access to all e-Government systems,
- security issues
- emergency readiness
- the provision of a national e-payment gateway.

15. Successful deployments of community electronic access points, as well as an initiative to subsidise personal computers to make them accessible to every household were also described as part of a strategy of e-Inclusion to avoid leaving segments of the population without access to the e-Government services. Programmes were also introduced to promote the generation of content, such as awards for the public sector and enterprises.

16. Mr. Azhar Ahmed, Director of the e-Government National Centre of Brunei Darussalam, shared the Vision 2035 of his government. This vision includes goals to develop by year 2035 a highly educated population, a high quality of living, and a dynamic and sustainable economy. The programmes sought to achieve the MDGs through the use of ICT; as an example, an electronic medical records system was presented for the achievement of health-related MDGs. Furthermore, the provision of free access to the Internet through schools was mentioned as a factor which contributed to an

explosive growth in Internet adoption, along with broadband. The e-Government policies, the organizational structure and cooperation of the public and private sectors were presented as a framework for the implementation of activities. Brunei's e-Government strategic plan 2009-2014 has a vision for E-Smart Government, establishing electronic governance and services, such as e-customs, mobile teaching and learning, company registration systems, e-health, e-procurement, and use of Public Key Infrastructure.

17. Mr. Chea Manit, Deputy Secretary General and Director of the Information and Communications Technology Technical Team of the National ICT Development Authority (NIDA) of Cambodia, presented the national ICT policy and its initiatives. This included PIAP public information access points, which are government-run and owned centres to provide access to government services including e-commerce, public health, among others. The ICT capacity building of staff working in the civil service was presented as a challenge, because once the personnel have been trained, they tend to leave to work for the private sector. Examples of e-Government applications which have been already developed in Cambodia include real estate and vehicle registration information systems.

18. Mr. Swinder Pal Singh, Senior Director of the Department of Information Technology of India, gave an overview of the challenges faced by India, as well as the opportunities available in a rapidly growing IT services and telecommunications sector. The presenter shared with the participants that the National e-Government Plan (NeGP) has core components such as infrastructure and ICT research and development, human capacity building, public awareness and organizational arrangements, which have resulted in the development or planned development of e-Government applications at the central government level in the domains of income tax, central excise, passport/visa, unique identification (bio-metric information of all citizens of India – project to be started next year). At the state and provincial levels, the plan envisages the development of applications in domains such as agriculture, land records, transport, treasuries, and police, while at the national level some applications include or will include e-Business, electronic data interchange (EDI), the India Portal, Common Service Centres (CSCs), e-Courts, and e-Procurement.

## **V. Outcomes and key findings**

19. A set of common challenges were identified by speakers and participants at the roundtable, highlighting the need for these to be addressed for successful e-Government initiatives and the achievement of MDGs through ICT in the Asia-Pacific region.

20. In particular, the session examined good practices and lessons learned on emerging technologies, applications and services which could be used in expanding ICT access among LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS and reviewed information dissemination and communication on the side of the information senders and how to take advantage of new technologies, applications and services to better reach the unconnected population and help achieve the MDGs. The meeting was also useful in disseminating the findings of ESCAP studies as well as experience of member countries in the above endeavours.

21. The lists below may be useful for policy and decision makers who will gather in Bangkok in November 2010 at the closing regional meeting on “Strengthening ICT Policies and Applications to Achieve MDG and WSIS Goals in Asia and the Pacific”, funded by the Korea-ESCAP Cooperation Fund, and may be considered by policy makers attending the Second Session of the Committee on ICT of ESCAP.

22. Challenges:

- The persistent lack of qualified IT manpower,
- The need to further strengthen project management functions,
- The need to strengthen ICT security,
- The challenge of integrating and aligning of various ministries to manage e-Government projects.

23. Areas requiring attention:

- Research and projects on broadband to the home in urban and rural areas, using various technologies including wireless broadband, and fiber to the home plans,
- Improving delivery of government services continuously through e-Government initiatives,
- Investing in infrastructure is required to cover all areas with telecommunications,
- Strong leadership is required at a high-level to accelerate development of the ICT at the national level,
- Finding a right balance between centralized and decentralized initiatives for the implementation of e-Government projects,
- Establishing service level agreements,
- Establishing multi-channel public service delivery for anytime, anywhere access,
- Deploying common ICT infrastructure to avoid duplication by various ministries
- Promoting ICT capacity building,
- Emphasising Public Private Partnerships,
- Carrying-out third party assessments of e-Government services provided, in order to verify the effectiveness of the initiatives.

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